the 33rd round

(SFX) EHHH
SHE TALKED ABOUT ME...!?
えーー
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME KYOKO HAD EVER MENTIONED ANY OF HER FRIENDS AT SCHOOL,
SO I REMEMBER IT WELL.
"NATSUKI," SHE SAID.

"HE'S COMPLETELY FULL OF HIMSELF AND EGOTISTICAL. A REAL SPITEFUL JERK."
SHE SAID.
"HE'S RIDICULOUSLY SELF-CONFIDENT AND STUCK UP."
Dann!
NAGA-SAWAAA!
FROM HER DESCRIPTION I THOUGH YOU MUST BE REALLY TERRIBLE, BUT THEN:
PRETTY MUCH EXACTLY.
SHE SAID.
"I HOPE I GET TO BE IN THE SAME CLASS WITH HIM NEXT YEAR."
EH...!?

NEXT YEAR?
IT WAS SOON AFTER SHE HAD STARTED HIGH SCHOOL.
YOU PROBABLY DON'T REMEMBER, THOUGH.
BUT YOU MUST HAVE HAD SOME KIND OF EXCHANGE OF WORDS WITH HER.
EHH!?
NAGASAWA AND ME?
SOON AFTER ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL?
NO WAY.. THAT FIRST YEAR..
I WAS WORKING WITH MOM ON HER JOB AT THE COMPANY.
AND BUILDING THE HOUSE. I DON'T REMEMBER MUCH ELSE...
Are you doing proper work here!?
This support is pretty far off from the plans...
Say, what do you think of this product?

(SFX) HA HA HA
PROBABLY KYOKO ..WAS NOT A GIRL WHO STOOD OUT.
IN SCHOOL...
I don't know that much about it to begin with.
IT REALLY WASN'T ANYTHING IMPORTANT...
(SFX) AH HA HA HA
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. DON'T TRY TO REMEMBER IF YOU CAN'T.
NO, NO...SHE MAY BE LIKE THAT NOW,
A GIRL THAT ACTS AND TALKS LIKE THAT!
IN SPADES!
SHE DOES STAND OUT!
AH...
SHE HARDLY SAID ANYTHING TO ANYBODY.
BUT UP UNTIL RECENTLY

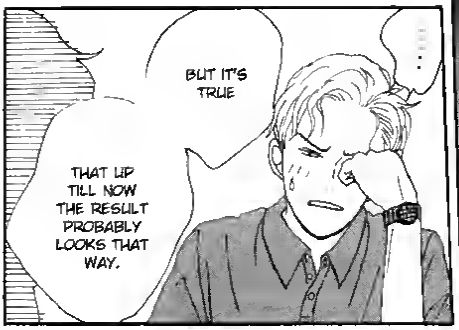
KYOKO HAS BEEN AN UNUSUAL CHILD EVER SINCE SHE WAS LITTLE.
"SHE HARDLY SAID ANYTHING IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL."
"SHE SEEMED A BIT AUTISTIC.'
IT SEEMS LIKE SHE HAD SOME BAD EXPERIENCES
COME TO THINK OF IT
SHE HAD TROUBLE MAKING FRIENDS IN SCHOOL AND WAS OFTEN BULLIED...
BUT, WELL, IT'S A COMMON STORY UNIQUE CHILDREN OFTEN GET PUSHED OUT OF GROUP ACTIVITIES

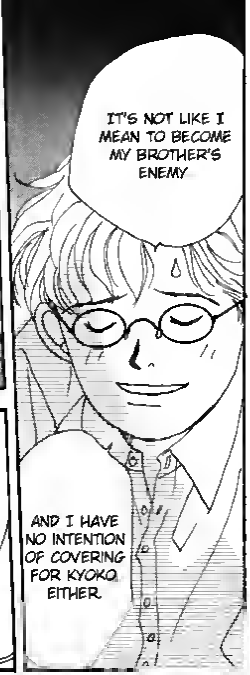
(SFX) SIGH
はぁ
IT DIDN'T GO SO WELL WITH HER FATHER AND MOTHER EITHER..
BUT TO EVEN GET PUSHED OUT OF HER OWN HOUSE...
SHE OFTEN RAN AWAY FROM HOME TO THIS GALLERY.
FOR KYOKO,
YOU MIGHT CALL THIS GALLERY HER "SAFE SPACE".
SAFE SPACE...!?

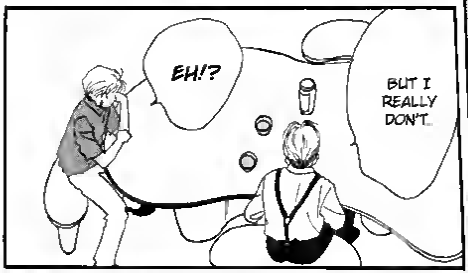
THAT GIRL RAN AWAY FOR THE FIRST TIME WHEN SHE WAS FIVE.
SINCE THEN, SHE HAS NEVER RETURNED HOME.
IS THAT WHAT HE MEANT!?
I SEE.
(SFX) HA HA HA
I expect you already know that.
KYOKO'S FATHER INHERITED OUR LATE MOTHER'S SERIOUS PERSONALITY...
MY BROTHER...
"WHAT IS A PAINTING ANYWAY!?"
Damn old man!
Sorry
Ahhh! That's three days worth of milk money!
WHILE MY MOTHER WAS LEFT TO WORRY ABOUT THE PROBLEMS IN OUR LIVES
FROM AN EARLY AGE I WATCHED MY FATHER NATTERING ON ABOUT THE GALLERY AND PAINTINGS AND TOTTERING AROUND OUTSIDE.

"CAN IT PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE!?"
OH WELL . THE GALLERY MADE MONEY WHEN IT MADE MONEY.
SO FOR THAT REASON, MY BROTHER DOESN'T WANT TO SEE KYOKO IN THE PAINTING OR GALLERY BUSINESS ..
Or so it seems.
IT'S AN UNCERTAIN BUSINESS ..
I SEE ...
That's really true.
I FULLY UNDERSTAND HIS FEELINGS.
(SFX) AH HA HA HA
I GUESS ..
NOT ♡
BUT THERE'S NO WAY SHE'D EVER UNDERSTAND, I SUPPOSE.
I GUESS THAT'S THE WHOLE PROBLEM

ART FACTIONS THAT SPAN THREE GENERATIONS OF THE NAGASAWA FAMILY
THE REALIST FACTION FIGHTING BLOOD AGAINST BLOOD.
OH...
BUT...
NOT REALLY...
I'M NOT ON ANYONE'S SIDE.
SURELY YOU ARE ON KYOKO'S SIDE IN THIS RIGHT!?
IT'S TRUE I LOVE PAINTINGS AND THE LIKE.
THEY SAY I'M JUST LIKE MY Llate FATHER.
Of course.
BUT


THAT LIP TILL NOW THE RESULT PROBABLY LOOKS THAT WAY.
BUT IT'S TRUE
...


IT'S NOT LIKE I MEAN TO BECOME MY BROTHER'S ENEMY
AND I HAVE NO INTENTION OF COVERING FOR KYOKO EITHER.

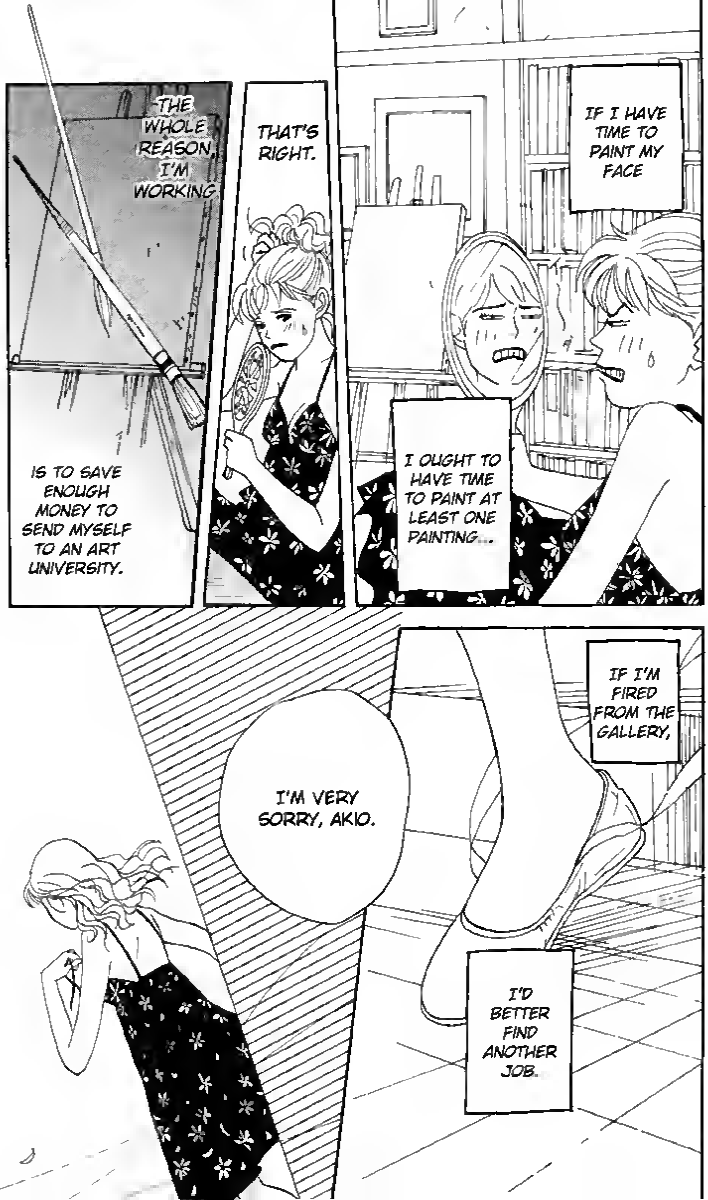

EH!?
BUT I REALLY DON'T.

BECAUSE VERY SOON I PLAN TO RETURN TO FRANCE.

(SFX) HA HA HA
KYO-KOHHH!?
LEAVE HER BE! LEAVE HER BE!
(SFX) CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP
KYOKO
KYOKO! IT'S MORNING!
(SFX) HA HA HA
SHE'LL COME OUT AS SOON AS SHE GETS HUNGRY ENOUGH.
Try letting her have a whiff of her favorite curry.

BUT
ONCE SHE STAYS SHUT UP IN HER ROOM, THERE'S NO TELLING HOW MANY DAYS SHE'LL STAY IN THERE...
HMPH!
IF SHE WANTS TO SHUT HERSELF UP, LET HER SHUT HERSELF UP!
AT LEAST SHE HASN'T RUN AWAY FROM HOME.
AND SHE'S GOT LOTS OF FREE TIME WITH SUMMER BREAK
(SFX) CLATTER
BUT
KYOKO HAS HER WORK AT THE GALLERY...
SHE'S FIRED FROM THAT! FIRED!
OF COURSE SHE IS.
TO BLOW OFF A PART-TIME JOB TWO DAYS IN A ROW,
EVEN IF THE SHOP MANAGER AKIO FORGIVES IT,
I AS OWNER WILL NOT!

(SFX) HA HA HA HA HA
FIRED!
EVEN THOUGH THE GALLERY IS GOING UNDER ANYWAY...
(SFX) HA HA HA
CALL UP AKIO AND TELL HIM SHE'S FIRED!
SO DO ME A FAVOR.
(SFX) HA HA
SEE YOU LATER!
(SFX) SIGH
EVEN THOUGH...
I REALLY DO HAVE A LOT OF FREE TIME...


IF I HAVE TIME TO PAINT MY FACE
I OUGHT TO HAVE TIME TO PAINT AT LEAST ONE PAINTING...
THAT'S RIGHT.
THE WHOLE REASON I'M WORKING
IS TO SAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO SEND MYSELF TO AN ART UNIVERSITY.
IF I'M FIRED FROM THE GALLERY,
I'D BETTER FIND ANOTHER JOB.
I'M VERY SORRY, AKIO.

EH!?
UH-HUH
KYOKO IS STILL ASLEEP...
IT SEEMS LIKE SHE'S TAKING ANOTHER DAY OFF FROM HER JOB.
MOM!?
SHE'S CREST-FALLEN FOR SURE.
BECAUSE YOU TOLD HER YOU'RE QUITTING THE GALLERY.
(SFX) EH
えっ
WHAT!?
BUT ARE YOU SURE?
IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?
OF...COURSE IT'S A BIG HELP TO US.

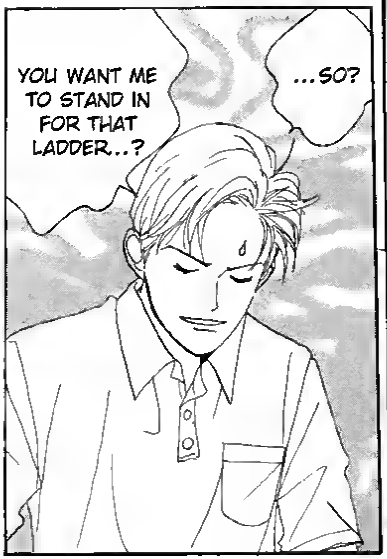
WHAT ON EARTH...
I'M SURE HE KNOWS HE CAN'T COMPETE WITH YOU.
UH-HUH..
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT WITH UNCLE AKIO!?
MOM..
YOU KNOW.
THE BOOK-STORE RIGHT NOW..
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT BOOKSTORE BUILDING HAS ARRIVED AT SUCH A STATE...
HOW CAN WE POSSIBLY...
MAKE IT UP TO YOU?

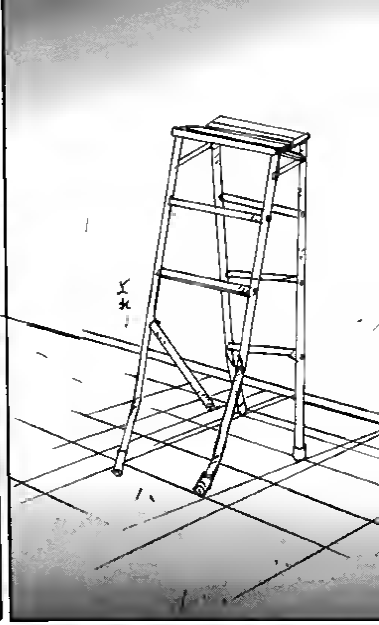
(SFX) SIGH
(SFX) KER-CHAK
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THE BOOKSTORE BUILDING!?
(SFX) STEP STEP STEP
AH...
(SFX) STEP STEP STEP
KYOKO!?

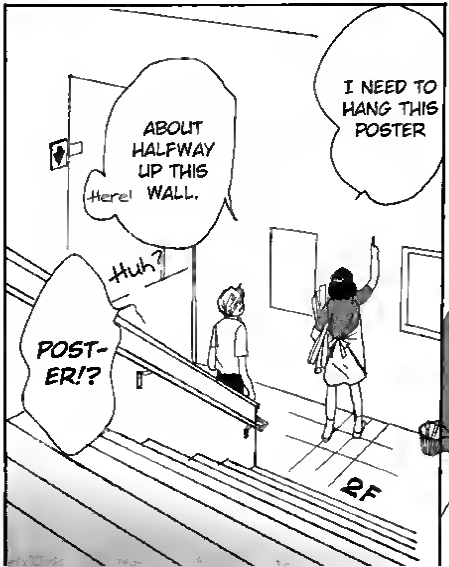
WH- WHERE ARE YOU GOING!?
LOOKING LIKE THAT?
TO THE BOOK STORE!
(SCRIBBLE) EHHH
where?
MOM AND DAD
AND EVEN UNCLE AKIO
THEY'RE ALL HIDING SOME-THING.
THEY'RE ALL DECEIVING ME!

WEL-COME!
THAT WILL BE ¥980.
Thank you for coming in
WEL-COME!
BUILDING

Guess... who... ♡
IT'S... meee... ♡
Rumi ♡
The girl who sells comics on the FIRST ♡ floor.
I need your help. ♡
(HEAVY SCRIBBLE) WAHHH


YOU WANT ME TO STAND IN FOR THAT LADDER...?
...SO?



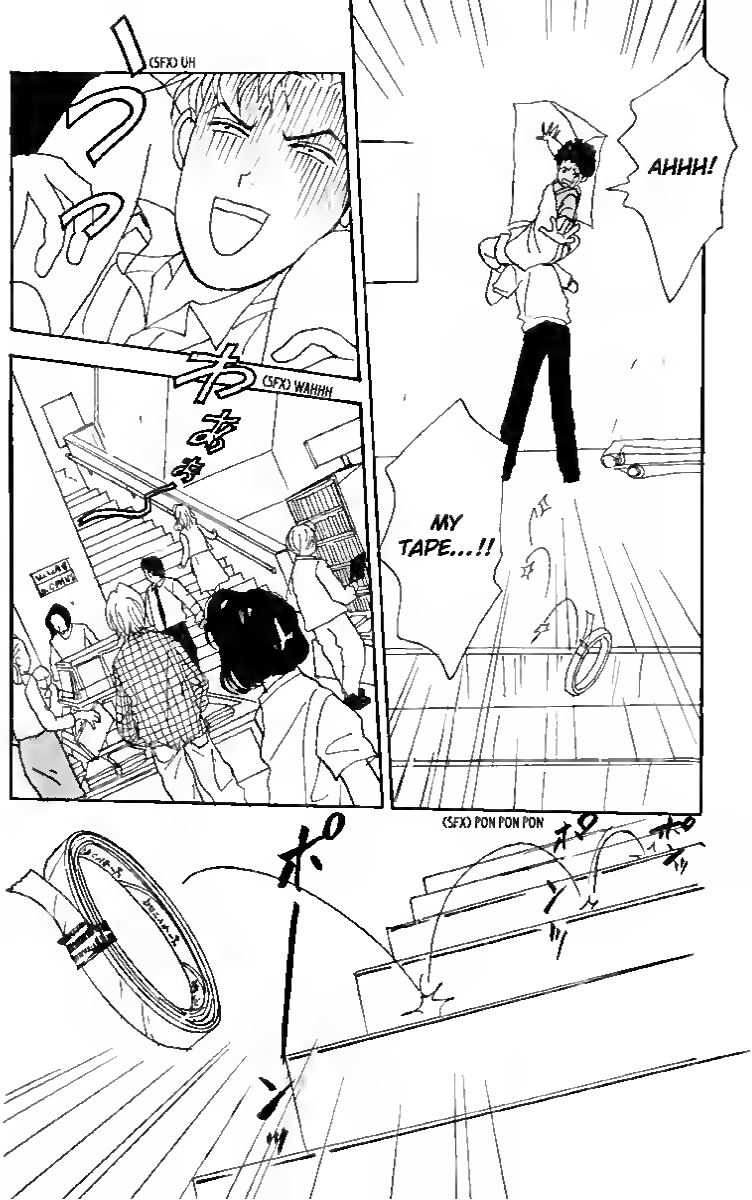

I NEED TO HANG THIS POSTER
ABOUT HALFWAY UP THIS WALL.
Here!
Huh?
POST-ER!?
2F

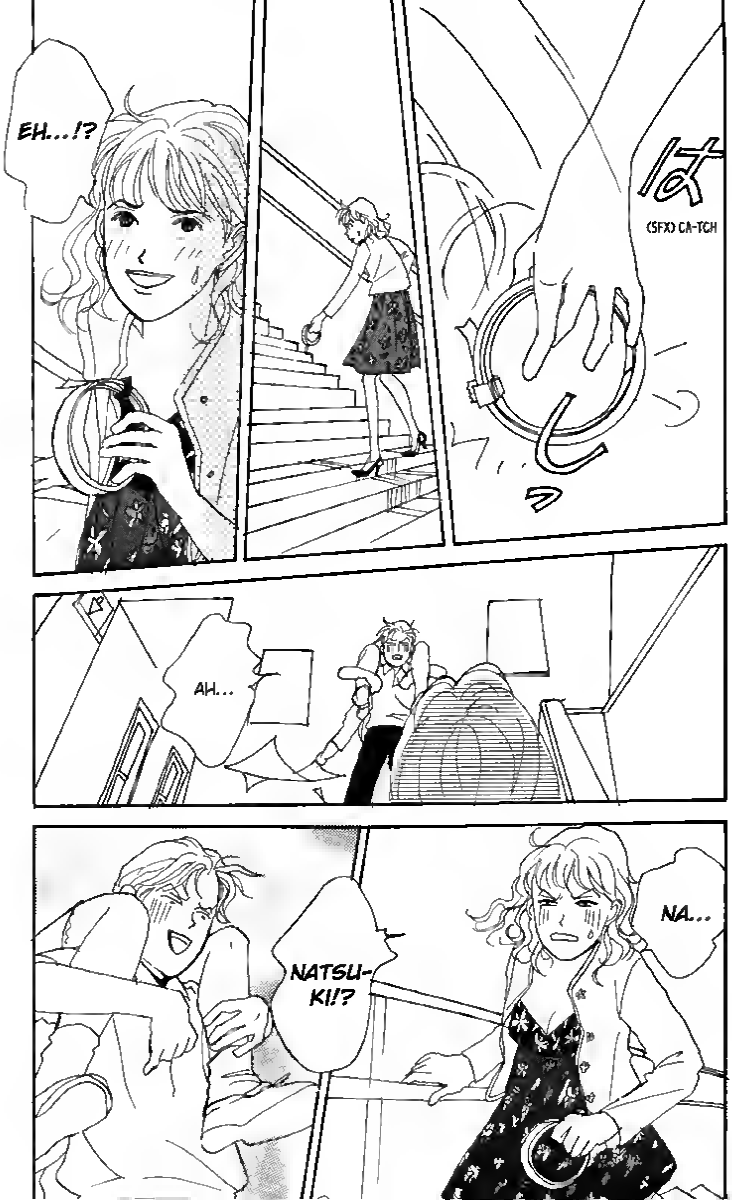
Ding ding ding!
giggle
That's right!

DEMONS!
LIKE GHOSTS ...?
SHEESH, MANAGER. YOU'RE SO YOUNG AND YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT?
F-
FRIARS?
"DEMON FRIARS" IS GETTING A VIDEO ADAPTATION!
WE'LL SOON BE TAKING PREORDERS FOR IT!
INDEED. ♡
ビデオ化決定！
3／1.発売.予約受付中！
WHAT-EVER.
NOW CROUCH DOWN HERE!
WHAT KIND OF TIMES...?
YOU NEED TO GET WITH THE TIMES.

(SFX) EHHH
WHY DO I HAVE TO LET YOU RIDE PIGGYBACK ...!?
IF IT'S JUST THIS CRAPPY POSTER, I CAN REACH IT HIGH ENOUGH MYSELF...
PIGGY-BACK. ♡
CROUCH DOWN HERE.
Yes
EH
THE POSTER WOULD BE TOO EASY TO STEAL!!
NO! THAT WILL BE TOO LOW!
(SCRIBBLE) NOW
HOW MANY PEOPLE WAS IT?
one two three
THERE ARE FANS THAT WOULD PAY FIFTY OR EVEN A HUNDRED THOUSAND YEN FOR THAT POSTER.
WHO WOULD EVER STEAL A POSTER LIKE THIS?
(SFX) HA
STEAL...
(SFX) HA HA HA

DAMN
WHY IS IT SINCE YESTERDAY I'VE BEEN DOING NOTHING BUT THIS KIND OF SKETCHY WORK!?
(SFX) HO HO HO
ホホホ…
THIS IS ME WE'RE TALKING ABOUT!
STRETCH YOUR LEGS AND STAND TALL...
MR. THRIFTY ♡
A LITTLE HIGHER ♡
AH!
LET'S GO, THRIFTY! ♡
WHO IS MR. THRIFTY?
GO, GO, THRIFTY! ♡

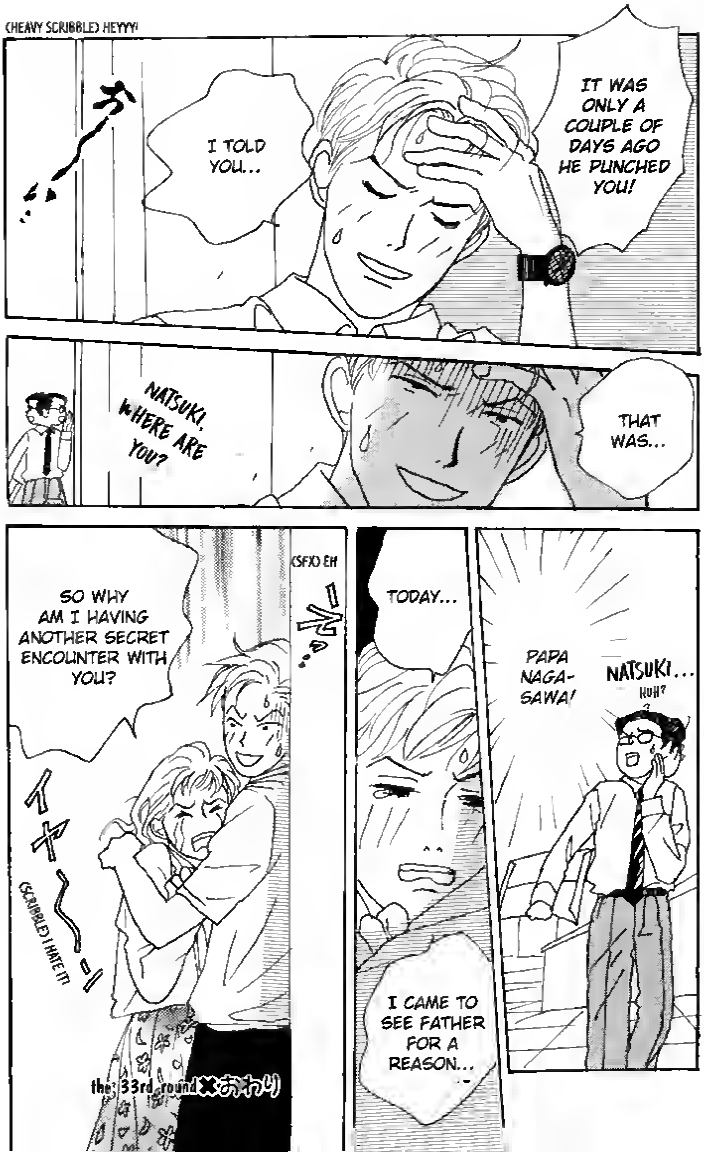

(SFX) UH
AHHH!
(SFX) WAHHH
MY TAPE...!!
(SFX) PON PON PON


EH...!?
(SFX) CA-TCH
AH...
NATSU-KI!?
NA...

AH...
YES
N-...
NO
THE WORST...
I DON'T BELIEVE IT...
テナント募集!
03(3515)
01×6
ビル2F
事務所まで
即入
4F
3F

I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT MYSELF
THAT HE WOULD TURN OUT TO BE THE BOSS AT THE PLACE I CHOSE FOR PART-TIME WORK...
HOW COULD YOU BE WORKING AT MY FATHER'S BOOKSTORE...
I TOLD YOU.
(SFX) AHHH
BUT PRETENDING YOU'RE OLDER THAN YOU ARE, DISGUISING YOURSELF, AND CARRYING A MATURE WOMAN OVER YOUR SHOULDERS!
I KNOW IT'S PART-TIME WORK,
I REALLY JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
FORGET ABOUT THAT JUST NOW!

EH?
DECEIVING ME.
SNEAKING AROUND...
WHY IS IT?
EVEN YOU.
HMPH
THEN WHY DID YOU CHOOSE IT!?
I DIDN'T CHOOSE THIS PLACE BECAUSE I LIKE IT...
SNEAKING ...!?
(SFX) UH
BUT IT'S MY DAD'S STORE!
YOU DECEIVED ME!
WHY DOES ANYONE CHOOSE A PART-TIME JOB!?


(HEAVY SCRIBBLE) HEYYY!
I TOLD YOU...
IT WAS ONLY A COUPLE OF DAYS AGO HE PUNCHED YOU!
NATSUKI, WHERE ARE YOU?
THAT WAS...
(SFX) EH
SO WHY AM I HAVING ANOTHER SECRET ENCOUNTER WITH YOU?
(SCRIBBLE) I HATE IT!
the 33rd round ×おわり
TODAY...
I CAME TO SEE FATHER FOR A REASON...
PAPA NAGA-SAWA!
NATSUKI...
HUH?